SConnects @ the Library

2005 Online Survey

Results Summary

Dr. Curtis R. Rogers, Director of Statewide Library Services

SConnects @ the Library web site originated as part of a marketing campaign to inform South Carolinians of the wealth of resources available in their public libraries and to encourage use of these resources. The web site portion of the project focuses on reliable and librarian-selected web sites for use by patrons at the library.

In the absence of having a main library web site, many public libraries in South Carolina chose to use this web site as their start page at public access workstations. Some libraries decided to bookmark the site and use it at selected Internet workstations or in designated areas such as the children's room. Today, with most libraries providing access to their own unique web site, some libraries have stopped using the SConnects web site in-house as a start page. However, many small to medium sized libraries continue to direct patrons to the site through their web sites and workstation bookmarks as a value-added resource of helpful web links and featured monthly sites.

This survey was conducted online using SurveyMonkey.com. This survey was web-based and only accessible during the month of August from the start page of the SConnects @ the Library web site (http://www.sconnects.org/). No emails were sent to possible users of the web site to solicit responses. All responses were completely voluntary and anonymous.

The web site consists of a featured monthly site selected by the project team, which consists of Mary Morgan, Director of Information Services, Jane Connor, Youth Services Consultant, and Dr. Curtis R. Rogers, Director of the Division of Statewide Library Services. Examples of previously featured monthly sites are:

- Biography.com
- Garden.org
- Vacationreading.org
- Recreation.gov

- National Poetry Month: Poets.org
- Crafts Month: DIY Network

- Black History Month: a collection of Internet sites
- IPL: Science Fair Project Resource Guide

Over the past 5 years, the web site has grown to encompass links to resources identified in the following categories:

- DISCUS
- General Reference
- South Carolina Information

- Business and Employment
- Government
- Education

- News and Weather
- Teens
- Kids
- Find More Sites

The Kids section of the web site features sections in the following categories:

- Animals
- Books and Reading
- General Information

- People and Places
- Science and Math
- Find More Sites

Demographics:

Ninety respondents completed the survey. The majority of responses (22.2%) who accessed the web site during the month of August came from either employees of or individuals serviced by the Aiken-Bamberg-Barnwell-Edgefield Regional Library System. Greenville County (18.9%) and Oconee County (16.7) had the next highest response rates. Other responses came from the following counties: Abbeville, Chester, Chesterfield, Colleton, Darlington, Fairfield, Greenwood, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Lexington, Marion, Newberry, Orangeburg, Pickens, Richland, Sumter, and Williamsburg. There were no responses from the following counties: Allendale-Hampton-Jasper Regional Library System, Anderson, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Chapin (Memorial Library in Myrtle Beach), Charleston, Cherokee, Clarendon, Dillon, Dorchester, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Lee, McCormick, Marlboro, Saluda, Spartanburg, Union, and York.

Respondents placed themselves into the following categories: Senior library user age 65 or older (2.2%), Adult library user age 18-64 (27.8%), Library Employee (65.6%), Student Library User (3.3%).

Respondents offered a broad range of responses when asked how they learned about the web site. The majority (29.2%) learned about the web site through their Public Library's web site. Very few (2.2%) learned about the web site by using a search engine,

while others (19.9% each) learned about the site via the SC State Library's web site or through email communication. Others (16.9%) learned about the web site by attending a library-sponsored or school-related training session.

The majority of respondents were located in South Carolina, with only one respondent located in a state other than South Carolina (Florida).

Web Site Usability

Respondents were asked if they liked the overall design of the web site to which 90.4% responded favorably. Some respondents also provided valuable feedback on how the web site should change:

- *It still needs a word search function for information contained within the site and hotlinks to the public library webpages across the state of South Carolina.*
- *Brighter colors/pictures for the icons and kids section (the rollovers are cute, but look dim)*

Respondents were also asked to select the sections of the web site they used the most. The top-ranking sections used from the start page were DISCUS (68.1%) with South Carolina Information (45.8%) and General Reference (44.4%) coming in second and third. Also, 82.2% of the respondents found the featured monthly site useful.

Those respondents who use the Kids section found the Books and Reading section (69.2%) and the People and Places section (61.5%) to be the most useful.

Respondents were also asked if the additional features on the web site were useful. Of the four highlighted additional features, *Finding Information on the Internet: A Tutorial* was ranked highest (59.5%) and *The Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents and Kids* ranked second highest (52.4%). Overall, respondents found the selected links on the web site to be current and reliable (97.3%).

Respondents were also given the opportunity to make suggestions to improve the links:

- *Perhaps a monthly feature called "Little known South Carolina websites" which would have nicely done websites about South Carolina history etc.*
- *It could be a little easier to navigate to government agencies or other library catalogs.*

Open-ended Responses:

Lastly, respondents were provided the opportunity to make comments related to how Internet access at the local library has impacted the user's knowledge and skills, behavior and attitudes, and condition or life status. While many of the respondents are library staff members, some of the general public respondents provided input as well. The following are selected responses:

- *Internet access has positively impacted me in several ways. I have increased my knowledge in numerous areas of personal and professional interest using the Internet. I have honed my information gathering skills and my overall computer skills due to Internet access at my library. My professional status has increased due to my ability to use public access Internet in order to complete a master's degree in my field.*
- *It has provided access to more information and allowed for the research of topics that may not be covered in depth within the library's collection.*
- *Gives confidence in the ability to answer most questions. Helps get a quick answer. Good to have up to date information available. Can produce information that might not be in book form on the shelf. A starting source to expand through books for more detail as well. I use Internet in combination with available material. The speed of Internet is wonderful.*
- *Has tremendously increased my awareness of the explosion of knowledge and interconnectedness of EVERYTHING! Thanks so much to State Library for your part in this. Keep up the good work.*
- *As a library employee, internet access has allowed me to better serve the public by opening up access to a variety of resources that are not readily available in print here at the library. In my personal life, Internet access has provided me with a wealth of knowledge. I am currently working towards my MLIS degree through the distance education program at USC. Having access to the Internet at work, a public library has made a world of difference.*
- *As a staff member, I am amazed at the number of people now using public access computers in the library. Helping patrons has improved my skills and made me aware of the need for this service in our small rural area.*
- *Internet access at the library is a wonderful thing. It can inform and entertain. Being able to use Discus as another reference for children makes it absolutely irreplaceable.*
- *Thank you for the opportunity to travel in cyberspace. I use it on occasion to get information that without the Library I would not have ready access to.*

- *As a staff member, our library has seen a huge increase in the volume of Internet and computer use. Patrons are using the Internet as a basic component of their daily lives. It has become indispensable. I use it to answer reference questions and to order materials from other libraries. Without Internet access at the library, I would be severely hindered in my ability to provide answers and materials to the public.*
- *While the Library isn't the only place I have access to the Internet, the Reference Librarians are always helpful. They save me a lot of time when I'm searching for information for my children or myself. The Library's connection is much faster than the one I have at home.*
- *As a librarian Internet access as greatly impacted the service that I am able to provide while at the reference desk. I also find that patrons still need help finding websites while using the Internet on their own. Being a rural library, I also see people of all education, income levels, and race using the library. It really provides and opportunity for non-computer users to use computers and the Internet. Even some computer owners will come in to use our Internet access.*
- *Because we are able to access current reports, data, research information, etc., it has increased our library staff's work productivity.*
- *The Internet has become a vital part of my everyday work. I can hardly fathom what it would be like not to have it. If it goes down for a while, I feel so frustrated because I cannot function in an organized manner without the wealth of information I use on the Internet. I use it every day, all throughout the day. I research myriads of topics - and most of the time I find what I need fairly quickly. I am amazed at the materials available. For example, whenever I need information on a new work topic or health information or just personal interests, I can always find materials on the Internet that affect what I do, how I feel, and how I work.*

The SConnects @ the Library web page team will continue to provide monthly featured sites and continue to replace dead links with librarian-selected and evaluated web sites for patron use. The team thanks all respondents for taking the time to complete the survey. Based upon the survey results, the team will also review the addition of new links and information at the SConnects @ the Library web site. We will continue to provide library staff and users with reliable and current online information.

Appendix – Survey Questions

south carolina
STATE LIBRARY

SConnects @ the Library Web Site Survey

1. Introduction

SConnects @ the Library web site originated as part of a marketing campaign to inform South Carolinians of the wealth of resources available in their public libraries and to encourage use of these resources. The project team is looking at ways to improve the web site for continued use by the public and libraries in South Carolina. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. We appreciate you taking the time to answer a few questions so that we may serve you better.

Next >>

2. Demographic

Please provide us with some background information to help us better understand those who use the web site.

* **1. Internet user category:**
- ⚪ Senior Library User (age 65 or older)
- ⚪ Adult Library User (age 18 or older)
- ⚪ Student Library User (age 17 or under)
- ⚪ Library Staff member
- ⚪ Other (please specify)
  [_____]

* **2. Please select your primary South Carolina County or Regional Library System? If you are from outside South Carolina, please select "other" and type your location.**

[_____▼]
[_____]

<< Prev   **Next >>**

3. Site Use

* **3. How did you learn about SConnects @ the Library web site?**
- ⚪ Public Library web site
- ⚪ SC State Library web site
- ⚪ School/Training Session
- ⚪ Email
- ⚪ Search Engine
- ⚪ Other (please specify)
  [_____]

<< Prev   **Next >>**

4. Usability of links

* **4. Do you like the overall design of the web site?**

      Yes   No

      ◯   ◯

5. If you answered "no" to the previous question, what would you like to see change?

* **6. Which main section(s) do you use the most? (Check all that apply)**

☐ DISCUS
☐ General Reference
☐ South Carolina Information
☐ Business and Employment
☐ Government
☐ Education
☐ News
☐ Teens
☐ Kids
☐ Find More

7. If you checked Kids, which section(s) of the Kids page did you find most useful? (Check all that apply. Leave blank if you do not use this section)

☐ Animals
☐ People and Places
☐ Books and Reading
☐ Science and Math
☐ General Information
☐ Find More

* **8. Do you find the monthly featured site useful?**

      Yes   No

      ◯   ◯

9. Do you find the additional features of the site useful? Please check all that apply:

☐ Finding Information on the internet: A Tutorial
☐ The Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents and Kids
☐ GetNetWise.Org
☐ Kids Count Reports

* **10. In general, do you consider the selected links to be current and reliable?**

      Yes   No

      ◯   ◯

11. If you answered No to the previous question, please explain:

12. What other features would you like to see added to SConnects @ the Library?

<u><< Prev</u>   <u>Next >></u>

5. Impact

11. Please describe how Internet Access at your local library has impacted your knowledge, skills, behavior, attitude, condition, or life status:

<< Prev   Next >>

6. Thanks!

The SConnects @ the Library web site project team appreciate your feedback. Thanks again!

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